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ceding classes. One glance suffices to indicate how far Belgium falls behind. It is perhaps well to again remind ourselves that in both France and Belgium the original agitation for the abolition of child labor took the form not of making rigid and high age requirements but of barring out children from certain industries which were emphatically dangerous to their health. But the whole trend of the movement in France plainly indicates that there has been an infusion of other ideas and France is slowly working up to the higher standards in the direction of age requirements, while at the same time far outdistancing other countries in the number of its prohibitions which protect children up to 18 years even. Belgium has let down the bars somewhat since the Law of 1889 and it remains to be seen just what will be the administrative history of the next few years. The period of what looks like disastrous compromise is not over.

### *A Repeated Lesson.*

Nevertheless Belgium repeats the lesson which France taught. Backward indeed on age, educational and night work limitations, it again points out to us the value existing in continental systems of administration and administrative decrees in barring children from many particular industries. Though these systems of prohibitions were born out of a spirit of compromise, still it is a question if when we have established our fixed standards in the United States, we shall not turn to them for suggestions as to further specific prohibitions. There is need yet for the protection which specific prohibitions will give to boys between 16 and 18 and young women to 21 as well as to children between 14 and 16 so long as their employment is legal.

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## THE RELIEF OF THE POOR IN ITALY.

BY DR. G. M. PALLICCIA, PERUGIA, ITALY.

In those States of Europe where the Reformation took root, there manifested itself once more, though under another aspect, the pagan system of public charity, the obligation of the State to succor the needy. Italy, remaining Catholic, still considered charity as a duty resulting from the tie of fraternity amongst all men, a duty which did not belong to the Government, but to the more fortunate members of society. Legacies and foundations "*ad pias causas*," in the most varied forms,—small doles, alms-houses, medical relief at home or in hospitals, *crèches* and infant asylums multiplied, always more or less associated with religious worship. These hybrid institutions, which were something between public, private, and ecclesiastical charities, began from the eighteenth century to be regarded with disapproval in some Italian States, which, notwithstanding the obstacles raised by the Church, tried to bring these "*Opere Pie*" under the control of the State. At the same time the idea of public charity began to make progress. Count

Cavour wrote in 1835 a valuable discussion on the voluminous Report of the Commission appointed in 1832 "to make diligent and full enquiry into the practical operation of the laws for the relief of the poor in England and Wales," showing the effects which the proposed reforms would have. In his speech made in Parliament on the 17th of February, 1851, he did not hesitate to declare: "I believe that there exists an immense prejudice against public charity, but nevertheless one can predict that every society arrived at a certain stage of development must adopt such a policy. I believe also that experience will show in the not far future that public charity, well administered, under prudent regulations, may produce immense benefits without having those fatal consequences which are so much feared."

But the first legislative reforms in charitable administration took place at an epoch in which statesmen were imbued with the doctrines of the orthodox philanthropy; and had a deficient knowledge of the condition of the poorer classes of the new Kingdom, an ignorance which became absolute south of Tuscany. All this hindered the Government from having a clear vision of what to do. Thus the varied forms of public beneficence were regulated by laws which were diverse and disconnected, if not absolutely contradictory.

Since Italians themselves find it difficult to comprehend the organization of public beneficence in their own country, it is by no means easy to present a complete and exact abstract of that very intricate system, which only differs essentially from those of England and France. The reforms hitherto carried out have to a great extent succeeded (1) in regulating the operation of the "Opere Pie," which had become sources of waste and extravagance; and (2) in "wrenching from the hands of faithless and covetous administrators the patrimony of the poor," as Minister Crispi declared on the 29th of April, 1890, in the Senate. On the other hand, they have not given to Italy an organic body of legislative provisions on this delicate and difficult subject.

The principal reform on which is based a great part of the actual system was effected in 1890. It was sought not only to better the administration of the "Opere Pie," but also to make charity as scientific as possible.

Of the "Opere Pie," properly so called, in 1890, there were in Italy 21,819 with a capital fund of about 2,000 millions of lire, which gave an actual income of 90 millions (which would have been about 100 millions if better administered). Of this income at least 40 millions were absorbed by charges on estates and expenses of administration, while of the 50 remaining millions the smaller part was devoted to works of beneficence, the larger being absorbed by expenditures for religious worship, which in Sicily reached 19 per cent., in the Neapolitan Provinces 31 per cent., and in Abruzzi 36 per cent. Some of the "Opere Pie" were better administered, though they did not yield the good results which they ought to have done in an enlightened country. In one of these charitable societies, which was said to be admirably managed and intended to bring up girls to household duties, the Hon. Villari found that, amongst more than one thousand pupils between eight to eighteen years of age, only 10 per cent. were able with difficulty to read and write.

Out of 21,819 beneficent institutions hardly a thousand had an endowment sufficient to pay their expenses. Of the others, 10,700 had a yearly income inferior to 500 lire (\$100), and 4,200 had less than \$300.

What benefit could these 14,900 institutions render to humanity if they could not even maintain themselves? Furthermore, there existed 4,215 "Opere Pie" with an endowment of 180 millions of lire, which yielded a yearly income of 10 millions. The great majority of these, acting on the principle of giving charity to whoever asked it, were becoming most injurious by promoting idleness and mendicancy.

Professional beggars grew and multiplied, and, in the communes where there were various charitable institutions, they availed themselves of all. In Venice, according to statistics made by the late Professor Cecchetti, one-third of the population was on the poor register. There were many beggars who had even taken a chair in Piazza San Marco in order to obtain charity in the most comfortable way possible. Although they paid more for the post than they would have done had they rented a shop, they, however, preferred this way of getting a livelihood, which was much easier than working all day, and they were sure of leaving a good fortune at their death. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to obtain reforms in the administration: first, economy in the management; secondly, the impossibility of abusing public charity; thirdly, the power of watching over and controlling all money bequeathed for charitable purposes. It was decided to substitute the Congregation of Charity (*Congregazione di Carità*) for the old statutory representation in the administration of the "Opere Pie." It is an executive committee of the public charity of the entire commune, existing in every commune, even if it has no funds to administer. The membership varies from four to twelve in proportion to the population of the commune, besides a president. The board is elected by the municipal council. Its principal duties are: (1) to administer and expend the moneys left for the poor generally, and not to specific institutions; (2) to regulate the institutions which have not, or cannot have, individual administrative bodies, and to temporarily control those institutions whose administrative bodies, by a royal decree, are dissolved in consequence of non-observance of the laws; (3) to promote the administration and judicial provisions for the assistance and protection of orphans and foundlings, of poor blind and deaf mutes, and assume temporarily their superintendence in cases of urgency.

The law of July 17th, 1890, declared that there should be concentrated under the management of the Congregation of Charity: (1) the institutions not having a yearly income exceeding five thousand lire (\$1,000), and which existed in a commune with less than ten thousand inhabitants; (2) all the eleemosynary and charitable institutions. In order to abolish charity in the old sense (which consisted in distributing money and soup at the doors of convents), the method of distributing relief was reorganized by devoting the incomes to some beneficence which was most in harmony with the nature of the institution and the intentions of the founder, following thus the English theory of the "cy-pres."

Besides these reforms, there has been made an entire change in the object

of many "Opere Pie." There existed in Italy 12,684 *confraternite* (associations of the faithful, having for their scope religious worship as well as charity, the majority being approved by the Bishop or the Pope), of which 9,464 had an endowment of their own amounting to 302,167,205 lire. The others were supported by begging and the contributions of the Associates. This endowment produced an income of hardly nine millions. Only 1,900,000 lire were spent in charity, the rest was spent on masses, lights, processions, fire-works, and similar matters. Several institutions had ceased to promote the objects for which they were created, or had purposes no longer corresponding to any public need. Others had become superfluous because their objects were in different ways fully provided for. It is enough to mention that in 1890 in two communes, Canepina (near Rome) and Positano (near Salerno), there still existed associations which had for their object ransoming slaves from the Turks; there being no more slaves to ransom, the Associates did as they pleased with the income. To change the will of the founder, which was called "*constans et perpetua voluntas*," to divert the funds left by him to other objects on the ground that the original intention had become useless and obsolete, met with great opposition in Parliament, some members declaring the State had not the right to despoil institutions not created but only recognized by it, just as it was not lawful to despoil individual citizens because they had become old and infirm. The opposition became even more serious when it was proposed to entrust such a faculty to the executive power. But after a great debate, in which reference was made to the English method of dealing with obsolete charities, the proposal was approved. Thus Parliament entrusted the executive power with the faculty of transforming not only the true and proper "Opere Pie" so as to divert them to a new charitable object of superior utility to the preceding one, but also other institutions not strictly charitable, such as endowments for monasteries, hospices for catechumenes, pilgrims and hermits, and similar institutions not founded for civil or social objects, fraternities and brotherhoods, "Opere Pie" of religious worship, excluding those corresponding to some real need of the population.

All these reforms, however, did not place public charity on a systematic basis. In Italy there is no Poor Law, and no public almshouses. The public system is not always homogeneous, but is complicated by various existing laws, according to which the communes and the provinces are obliged to grant certain subsidies. The function of public assistance being confided to local bodies, it necessarily follows that both public charity and the expending of alms assume a territorial character; and the funds in a given commune cannot be expended, as a rule, in favor of a poor individual belonging to another commune. Thus the communes or the provinces, or the charitable institutions must be repaid the money expended upon a poor individual not belonging to them. In order to identify the commune to which the poor belong, the law of July, 1890, substituted for the system of civil domicile that of the "domicile of succor." The recipient must have lived for more than five years in one commune without notable interruptions; and failing that, must establish the fact of birth, even if illegitimate, in the commune.

But what persons in Italy have the right to assistance, and by what institutions and authorities is it granted? There are three categories in which one may classify the destitute: (1) those who have not the will to work; (2) those who have not the means, and who, despite good-will, remain unemployed; (3) those who have not the power to work,—children, old people, the infirm and invalids. It is only to these last that the law gives the right to assistance, except in very urgent cases in which the Congregations of Charity, if they have the means, ought to succor the poor to whatever commune they belong, and without any right to be reimbursed. Thus the State does not guarantee subsistence to the unemployed, and does not provide employment for able-bodied persons. These, in Italy, are provided for by the institutions of private charity, which have always been very successful.

Thus, public assistance is guaranteed only to destitute persons who have not the power to work. The different and confused provisions of the laws may, therefore, be reduced to the following heads: (1) Each commune is bound to provide for the medical assistance of the poor both within and without their homes, and according to the law of 1904 to give them also medicines, if these are not provided by special charitable institutions. The list of the poor in each commune is compiled every year by the municipal "Junta." (2) Each commune is obliged to reimburse to the hospitals the expenses of the sick poor who have acquired the "domicile of assistance," but it can be recovered by the local Congregation of Charity or other institutes of beneficence which are liable to this obligation, except cases in which the statutes of the hospital exclude the right of being repaid. (3) The provinces are obliged to maintain the insane poor belonging to them in asylums. (4) The province and the commune together are bound to maintain foundlings. (5) The Congregation of Charity in each commune is obliged to fulfill in favor of the poor all these services we have already mentioned. (6) The hospitals and poor-houses are obliged to assist in urgent cases, although the poor person has not the "domicile of succor" in the commune. (7) Persons recognized by the local police authorities as being unable to work and being without means or relations bound to assist them, are by the same authority placed in a local poor-house, or failing that, in some other asylum. The expense for their maintenance is charged to the poor-house if financially able. But if the funds are insufficient, all or part of the expense will be charged to the commune of origin; and where the same cannot provide for them without imposing new taxes, it will be charged to the State. This is the only case in which the State, however subsidiarily, intervenes to meet expenditure on public charity.

In recent years a feeling of horror has grown up in Italy against the mischievous growth of begging. "I consider it a moral necessity," said Signor Crispi, the Prime Minister, in the Chamber of Deputies in 1888, "to proclaim loudly the principle that begging is unlawful also amongst us, and no longer can mendicancy be considered as authorized."

In 1888 it was enacted that not only everyone able to work, if caught in the act of begging, should be arrested and punished, but also those who, not having informed the police authorities that they were unable to work, were

found begging in the public streets. Unfortunately, this evil could not be entirely destroyed, but, after the powerful blows administered, it is beginning to disappear. And it would perish more quickly if the foreigners, especially English and Americans, who come to Italy, and who have no real knowledge of the true condition of the people, were not so ready to give their alms to the first beggar who demands it; not knowing that the really poor in Italy are reluctant to lower themselves by asking for money, and that, on the contrary, they do their best to earn their bread, if their physical powers enable them to do so; and if unable to work they seek some poor-house in which they will be welcomed.